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Citation for published version:

Grek, S, Lawn, M, Ozga, J & Segerholm, C 2013, 'Governing by inspection? European inspectorates and the creation of a European education policy space', *Comparative Education*, vol. 49, no. 4, pp. 486-502.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/03050068.2013.787697>

Digital Object Identifier (DOI):

[10.1080/03050068.2013.787697](https://doi.org/10.1080/03050068.2013.787697)

Link:

[Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer](#)

Document Version:

Peer reviewed version

Published In:

Comparative Education

Publisher Rights Statement:

©Grek, S., Ozga, J., Lawn, M., & Christina, S. (2013). Governing by Inspection?: European Inspectorates and the Creation of a European Education Policy Space. *Comparative Education*, 49(4), 486-502.

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Governing by Inspection? European Inspectorates and the creation of a European Education Policy Space

Abstract

This paper draws on work in progress in three European Inspection systems to discuss the extent to which the associational activities of European Inspectorates and their developing practices of policy learning and exchange may be understood in relation to an emergent European Education Policy Space (EEPS). The paper is framed by approaches to inspection that locate it as a set of governing practices, connected to changing governance forms and the growth of networks of relationships and flows of data across Europe. Comparisons are drawn between inspection as governing practice in Scotland, Sweden and England, using Jacobsson's (2008) conceptualisation of regulative, inquisitive and meditative governance as a framing device.

Introduction

This paper offers a further contribution to a developing area of research and theory on the Europeanisation of Education and the emergence of a European education policy space (EEPS) (see, for example, Lawn 2006, Jessop, Fairclough and Wodak 2008, Ozga et al 2011). It is based on current research adding the dimension of the inspectorate in Europe to previous work that has examined the role of data and changing relationships between policy and knowledge in the 'fabrication' of Europe (Novóa and Lawn 2002)¹ This

¹ Fabricating Quality in Education/Governing by Numbers (ESRC RES 0023-1385) Knowledge and Policy in the Health and Education Sectors in Europe (EUFP6 IP 028848-2) and Governing by Inspection: School Inspection and Education Governance in Scotland, England and Sweden (ESRC RES 062 23 2241A and the Swedish Research Council (Vetenskapsrådet). The authors acknowledge the support of their respective Research Councils. Further details about the project and working papers are available at xxx

research, though focused on different central topics, forms a coherent 'project' that seeks to challenge 'methodological nationalism' in education research and that also works with emergent approaches in comparative education, that explore the movement of transnational policies, and the transnational organisations, technologies and actors that facilitate and mediate those movements (Steiner-Khamsi 2003 Grek 2009). We understand the EEPS to exemplify the shift from hierarchical, bureaucratic forms and relations of government to governance in networks of relationships in which cooperation and coordination must be constantly negotiated and managed (Kohler-Koch and Eising 1999), through a mix of particular policy technologies, and constant work by policy actors to maintain connections and coherence in re-spatialised governing relations. That governing work is often 'done' through data, in what Latour (1987) calls 'Centres of Calculation'. Through the work of creating standards, benchmarks and indicators, some of the tensions between centralised and decentralised levels of governance, deregulation and existing or new (re-) regulatory instruments of governance in new multidimensional, overlapping and fluid relationships are managed. We use the term 'governing' (Clarke 2009) deliberately, marking our approach off as neither political science's multi-level 'governance' nor Foucauldian sociology's 'governmentality' but drawing attention to the active construction of a shared, regulated but fluid policy space that encompasses national and transnational contexts and their interactions.

Governing work is 'done' in that fluid space where information flows across borders, where OECD's PISA operates as a knowledge-based regulation tool (Carvahlo et al 2009) that both creates and renders visible the landscape of education performance within and across national systems. In this information rich and decentred landscape, what is the role of national inspectorates? Do they interpret, mediate or translate into action transnational performance based knowledge? Do they attempt to form alliances and associations that mirror and /or challenge the European Commission's policy agendas? To what extent do national traditions of inspection survive or spread within the emergent European policy space?

Throughout the discussion that follows, we are attempting to address these questions through a focus on the importance of forms of 'soft' governing (Lawn 2006) to the emergent role of inspection in the European Education Policy space. Soft governance operates through attraction (Lawn and Grek 2012); in other words, through drawing actors in to the governing work of translating, brokering and mediating education policy, while also embedding self-governance and steering at a distance through these processes and relations. 'Soft' governing works through the establishment and nurturing of networks and partnerships of different kinds of actors: in the next section of the paper we have tried to illustrate how SICI has attracted new policy actors into its work, while developing and sharing a sense of collective identity as a community of practice. The idea of soft governance works well, we suggest, with Jacobsson's thesis (2006 206-9) that governing European nation states

involves 'loose constellations of different organisations claiming authoritative knowledge' in fields 'packed with ideas and rules about how they are to be organised'. This, he argues, has given rise to new forms of governing activity, that have developed sequentially (and at different speeds), namely *regulative* (governing through formal laws and directives, but also 'soft rules' such as standardisation where disagreements about 'harmonisation' rule out harder regulation) *inquisitive*-(governing through auditing and ranking) and *meditative* (a governing form where experiences are compared and ideas shared). Inquisitive activities may involve evaluation of performance against the rules they have produced, or inquisitive activities may produce new rules. Inquisitive activities create a climate in which activities are 'opened up' for examination and critical judgement, thus preparing the ground for meditative activities, which may not connect directly to rule making or enforcement, but encourage discussion, comparison, the generation of ideas. Meditative governing practices build on regulation and auditing, but they also encompass them, and 'condition and envelop' other processes (Jacobsson 2006:208) They offer a space for policy learning and teaching, for the presentation of ideas and models and the claiming of status as holders of specific expertise.

We work with these ideas in presenting (below) the first results of a current study of the relation between inspection and the governing of education in three countries – Sweden, Scotland and England - each of which has contrasting systems of inspection, and each of which relates to the European

Association of Inspectors-the Standing International Conference on Inspection (SICI) in different ways. In each national case, systems of education are governed in complex contexts in which tradition, the role of public and private agents, the importance of performance measurement, the creation of hierarchies and markets and the extent of centralization vary, and contribute to asymmetrical relations within and across the systems examined here. The particular focus of this paper is on the actions of national associations of inspectors as they network together and share knowledge about system changes, new roles and good practice in Europe. Moving knowledge across borders has become a necessary part of their professional expertise. In those networking and mediating activities, we suggest, inspectors become part of a wider European network of governing work by experts, shaping and shaped by European education policy. We argue that sharing spaces of meaning is itself a Europeanizing effect, and a way in which the EU is produced and governed (Lawn and Grek 2012). We illustrate our argument in the first instance through a discussion of the history and development of the Standing International Conference on Inspection (SICI), before moving to consider differences and similarities in the interactions of each country with SICI.

Before going further, it may be useful to say a little more about the research methodology that we employed in identifying respondents and in analysing data. We focused our enquiry on the incidence and management of what we see as the 'tension in governance' between performance management and self-evaluation, or between hard and soft governance that is encapsulated in

inspection, making extensive use of policy texts, (European, national and local) and interviews with key policy actors. These texts included official and 'grey' literature, which were examined in order to elicit evidence about the agenda setting and policy learning capacities of SICI, as were the interviews we conducted. Interviews were conducted with senior officers in SICI, and with senior inspectors in each of the national systems who had particular responsibility for international work. Data were then analysed in relation to our key research questions, as indicated above (p.2).

We move now to setting out some illustrative material from the text analysis and interviews, which has also been selected to illuminate – albeit very briefly and schematically – our developing answers to questions about what inspection is for and how it may be understood as a governing practice.

Associating Inspectors in Europe: the work of SICI

The OECD, at the instigation of Netherlands, founded the Standing International Conference of Inspectorates (SICI) as the 'Conference of School Inspectorates in Europe' in 1985. It serves as a hub for inspectors, inspection systems and evaluation methodologies in education across Europe. Initially:

SICI started in the mid-1990s and it really started from, I think it was, 5 or 6 of the established inspectorates, the heads of the inspectorates in Europe meeting together and recognising mutual benefit in having just a series of regular meetings over time. Not terribly formal, not terribly

structured. So, it was Scotland, England, Portugal, France, the Netherlands and the Czech republic, were also involved [EPAI-1]²

Quality assurance and evaluation have been of primary interest to the organisation from the beginning:

Open borders in the European Union mean greater mobility among both teachers and pupils. Thus, school inspection needs to include quality assurance at home while, at the same time, opening up to other systems abroad. (SICI Newsletter, 1989)

The Dutch Inspectorate was the 'driving force' in the formation of SICI [EPAI-1]; it worked closely with the Dutch Ministry of Education, and was offered finance for international work. Increasing internationalisation and mobility across Europe meant that the Conference needed to be placed on a more formal footing, thus in 1995, SICI became a legally based association with the following aims: sharing experience; updating developments regarding education systems; finding ways to improve working methods; and establishing a basis for cooperation between the various school authorities. Douglas Osler, the SICI President [and the Senior Chief Inspector for Scotland at that time], in his speech to the International SICI Congress in Utrecht in 2000, considered 'The future of school inspectorates in the 21st century', stressing for the first time the need to focus on continuous improvement.

² We have coded our informants as follows European Policy Actor plus number EuPA-1, Scottish Policy Actor in Inspectorate –SPAI –plus a number, English Policy actor in Inspectorate-EPAI plus number, and Swedish policy actor in inspectorate –SWPAI plus number. In some cases we have combined letters-e.g. EuSPA-1-where, for example, an Inspector is in the Scottish inspectorate but carrying out European based activity, or EEuPA where an informant is in the English inspectorate but active in SICI .The Swedish team uses the coding SI (Swedish Inspector) and a number.

SICI grew through the organisation of workshops, the development of a descriptive study on the supervision and inspection of schools in Europe, the compiling of a critical analysis of school inspection in Europe and the instigation of shared projects based on joint visits or joint inspections. From 1995 onwards, SICI was involved in a number of studies and exchanges of expertise among inspectorates across Europe: these events 'provided opportunities to discuss and analyse key aspects of education and inspection...also [they] provide opportunities to develop the valuable personal contacts that can be built into partnerships' (SICI 2003; 6).

The range, volume and scope of these cross border events and projects has increased since the institution of the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) across the European Union, as has SICI's formal collaboration with the European Commission and the OECD. The move towards more engagement across national borders, in European collaboration and with a new policy emphasis in Europe on education was signalled to a SICI meeting in 2001 by a member of the Education Policy Unit of the EU DG Education and Culture. He described the OMC and the launch of indicators and benchmarking for education policy in Europe, as 'a silent revolution' and said that it created a 'new frontier for European integration' comparing the OMC with the completion of the internal market, the introduction of the euro and the enlargement of the Union (Tersmette, 2001). Tersmette emphasised that the work of associations such as SICI was crucial in this process as there was a need 'not only to close performance gaps between countries, but rather to close communication gaps'. Further, he contended that:

.....when we start debating and comparing quality issues in education, the process counts perhaps more than the results. It is about agreeing on terminology, on concepts, finding common ground, speaking common language (Tersmette 2001; no page numbers).

From 1998, and a membership of 14 countries, by 2011 SICI had developed into an association of 32 members, with an Executive Committee of 9 members and a Secretary General: its growth continues:

'probably this year to 33/34. Its growing tremendously – its huge. Its all the work of volunteers.... We also have new members in the pipeline - Trentino North Italy, Catalonia, Port of Spain, Serbia, Albania maybe, - they have a new Inspectorate in Albania, and also Serbia has a very new Inspectorate. (EuPA-1)

In recent years, growth has come from central and eastern European countries needing focused support from SICI, following either OECD country reviews [for example, of the former Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Albania and Romania] or reconstructing systems in preparation for EU accession. The key aspect of SICI support is 'the principles and practice of quality assurance and inspection' (SICI 2001; 9). This support for evaluation takes place through the organisation of workshops, as well as bilateral and multilateral collaboration between inspections with members of established, traditional inspectorates working with new European inspectorates.

As well as SICI's own annual activities, there are bilateral contracts arranged by its members. The European Commission committed itself to paying for these expert exchanges, since

'SICI has built up expertise in running workshops. SICI could do this well and SICI would make a valuable contribution to educational development in an expanding Europe' (SICI 2001; 9).

For example, England had bilateral agreements to work with Croatia, Estonia and Romania; Scotland has worked with Romania; and France has a bilateral agreement with Kosovo. A recent edition of the SICI Academy's Newsletter refers to the following events in late 2010

Romania links with Scotland, Lithuania, Portugal and Spain

Scotland and Norway are in discussions on education policy and evaluation

Netherlands inspectors in the People's Republic of China

Scotland Inspectorate (HMIE) offers International Training Event

Building an inspection system in Serbia

Training inspectors in Romania

SICI's main links are with the OECD and the European Commission, and SICI looks at its contribution to these 'stakeholders' as vital, both for the inspectors themselves and for the international organisations they work with:

Our members can improve their professional knowledge and skills through links with PISA...We have much professional knowledge and

skills that we can contribute to European-wide initiatives (SICI 2001; 24)

Closer collaboration between all SICI members, bilateral and multilateral agreements between national associations, and extensive training programmes which take place in the SICI Academy-a European-wide professional development school discussed in more detail below-weave SICI together as a European network of policy actors in education. SICI has attempted to create European projects on inspection and judgment on mathematics teaching and on teaching quality, and on school self-evaluation. These projects sought to extend the range of competence across the European inspectorate by developing professional judgment in evaluation, which could be drawn in SICI Academy courses. These projects appeared to support the possibility of producing common areas of knowledge and methodology from joint working. They

‘found it very useful to have discussions with foreign counterparts; a good deal had been learnt about the methodology of lesson observation’ (SICI 2001;8).

It was even suggested that a common approach to inspection of different national curricula could be created on a larger European scale, while the ‘value of seeking common indicators’ (SICI 2001;8) was also noted. Indeed SICI has held discussions with CERI-OECD to explore the possibility of developing common indicators for the assessment of teaching at primary school level. The project did not succeed, mainly because of lack of funding,

but it gives a sense of the scale of SICI's ambition to build on existing frameworks for inspection in England, Scotland, the Netherlands, Northern Ireland, Ireland, Flanders, Portugal and the Czech republic in order to devise a set of internationally comparable indicators for the inspection of teaching. It was regarded by SICI and CERI as being of more value than the increasingly influential PISA survey –

‘PISA results do not explain teaching, they are unable to explain different teaching methods’ (SICI 2001; 16).

There is evidence, then, of SICI members seeing the opportunity to exert their professional power through cross border collaborative projects. They are constructing a new technology of inspection, basing it on their success at a European level:

We learn from one another through discussion. We learn even more about the principles and processes of inspection by working alongside one another in schools on real inspections...As inspectors we have a key contribution to make and this will be much valued by educational policy makers (SICI 2001: 23)

Indeed, they claim a central position in the production of knowledge for policy, combining, they suggest, knowledge based on connoisseurship with understanding of data-driven knowledge production: in this they may embody the shift in governing that Jacobssen (2008) describes from audit of performance to consideration and analysis of information in ‘meditative’ governing:

With respect to methodology there is first of all the challenge of exploiting the unique advantages of inspectors, as 'educational connoisseurs', and combining these with the requirements of empirical educational research which demand structure and standardisation. The 'marriage' of the two approaches generally lead to observation methods that allow for the use of relatively global observation techniques which still contain sufficient structure to be amenable to assessing inter-rater reliability (SICI 2001; 30)

Inspectorates are working with their peers, and establishing a community of practice:

'Because they always want to learn from each other-Bilateral working was about ICT, a lot of bilateral working. There was a lot of projects, we went to several countries to have common observations "how do you define quality" 'what about indicators of leadership'because as an inspectorate in Flanders we are 150 but we have no peers within Flanders so who can you discuss with..... So, you are looking for some peers very close to you, who are doing the same job and that's why SICI is growing [EPAI-2]

The 'Effective School Self-Evaluation' project (ESSE) was highly significant in building this community. Funded by the European Commission (Socrates 6.1), the ESSE project ran for two years (2001-2003), and focused on the use and methodology of school self-evaluation and its relation to external inspection

or audit. Thirteen European countries and regions³ took part. The starting point for ESSE was the European Union's strategic target for 2010 - to be the most competitive, dynamic and knowledge-based economy in the world. According to Webb, the Scottish coordinator of the project, this target required modernisation of the education systems in Europe; it called for inspections across Europe to play a role in encouraging transparency, quality evaluation and self-evaluation (SICI Report, 2005, online). The relationship between self-evaluation and external evaluation [ie using statistical data for comparison] was major feature of the project (SICI Report, 2005, online).

Indeed the EU 2010 goals mark a step change for SICI. Sharing, developing, improving and cooperating are no longer sufficient in themselves, but become the means by which larger goals are to be achieved. The need for a European-wide group of experts in evaluating and improving school systems explains both SICI's internal drive to improve services and expertise and the external pressures on the association. SICI began to plan its future development in terms of its wider European obligations and the emergence of potential threats or challenges to the role of inspectorates. These threats included increased school autonomy which challenges fixed national standards but also requires clear standards; the tradition of evaluating teaching and schools as institutions rather than the policy turn that wanted inspectors to focus on the evaluation of learning; the impact of technology (especially data) in dislodging classroom based observation; the need to be

³ These were England, Scotland, Northern Ireland, Ireland, the Netherlands, Austria, the Czech republic, Portugal, France, the French-speaking community of Belgium, Hesse, Saxony and Denmark – Denmark, although it does not have an inspection system, has a long tradition of quality assurance processes. Therefore, the focus in Denmark was on the role of the Danish national advisors.

able to assess learning outside the classroom and the school curriculum; the direct link between educational performance and economic competitiveness which required 'independent and reliable analysis'; and finally the trend towards self-evaluation which suggests that inspections should be proportionate, and hence more limited (SICI Newsletter 2004).

As a response to these challenges, and in an attempt to turn them to advantage, two possible scenarios for the future of SICI were developed, these scenarios were not 'mutually exclusive...they overlap with one another'. In scenario 1: SICI would improve its performance as a service organisation for its members-in other words, it would continue much as before, while in scenario 2: SICI would become a European education organisation specialising in the evaluation of education practices (SICI 2004:13). In this stronger role SICI claims its place in the new EU policy space as 'an expert organisation recognised as such by agencies outside the immediate membership, It provides added value by offering expertise on the evaluation of education practices and comparative data and analyses of key aspects of education in Europe' (2004; 13). SICI's main objectives in this scenario are (i) to provide international access to the expertise of national inspectorates (ii) to raise the quality of the education debate in Europe (iii) to enhance the status of national inspectorates (iv) To strengthen the position and expertise of national inspectorates by international cooperation (SICI 2004; 14). These objectives reflect an attempt to combine national development of the inspectorates with a strengthened international presence and influence

through the positioning of SICI as the key source of collective expertise and a policy actor in European debates.

At the same time, the association strengthened its grasp on emergent policy technologies through the creation of a 'toolbox' for the integration of inspection and evaluation in Europe, asserting SICI's claim to a key expert role. The toolbox included instruments for the evaluation of education departments, contributions to European projects that assess education developments; reports on trends in European schools based on national data and analyses; participation in European education debates and workshops and seminars on education topics, not just for Inspectors but also for European education policy makers: the European Commission, national governments, education organisations and so on (SICI 2004; 14). SICI saw the opportunity to provide trustworthy knowledge to policy makers and become stronger policy players:

'I think it is that...EU doesn't have competence in school education- they can't push the boundaries very much in terms of where ...they should have a role. I think that they see that working with SICI from the Commission's point of view again blurs the boundaries of what they do. But from SICI's point of view the reality is that the EU has policy influence on member countries and it is one of the ways that SICI can be part of this policy interaction' (EuSPA-1)

Faced with perceived threats to the place of inspection nationally, and seizing the opportunity offered through the Lisbon process, as well as competition from other evaluators and analysts' (2004;16), SICI chose to change. This was a formative period for SICI, as a further threat/ opportunity had begun to emerge from the OECD with the growing impact of PISA. The inspectorates understood that the era of unquestioned power and authority based on their role in the national was over. Instead:

The place, role and status of inspectorates can longer be taken for granted. The quality of their products and services will increasingly be compared with other sources and could be challenged by other evaluators....like all public services, external evaluation of schools will increasingly be challenged to show its value for education and for society at large. Failing this challenge will endanger the future of inspectorates, as they will be failing to deliver the information and analyses that our societies need (SICI 2004; 18).

In support of their new European-wide role, SICI created an Academy (the SIA) as a linked unit to manage its training and exchange activities, as it expanded its membership and its aims. Workshops, seminars and conferences took place regularly as part of the Academy's programme.

'..the SIA.... is designed to make sure that we are not only providing exchanges but we are more actively encouraging, trying to provide services to members. Specifically for example, if a country, from the new members, is looking for support in terms of taking forward thinking about inspection then SICI can act as a broker that can

identify experts from different countries that can work with the country that is seeking support. [EuPAI-2]

The SICI Academy became the arena in which the older, more established inspectorates worked closely with the newer members to improve the quality of their inspection processes and outcomes. But the emphasis on creating a 'learning community' rather than a two speed Europe, is stressed:

'because we also can learn. Its not –you cease to be a professional inspectorate if you can't learn from very new members –and we have a very long tradition -because they are very critical friends, because you are doing years [of] the same, and then there is someone coming with a very –saying why are you doing that? Explain again? (EuPA-2)

The Academy has developed a strong sociality in its work, and focuses, mainly with external funding, on the ideas of innovation and flexibility. In effect, we suggest, it produces a new European model of inspection and a new common European corps of inspectors. They are interconnected, via the SICI web based sites, and face to face in the annual meetings or in training exchanges. Despite the heterogeneity of contexts and tradition across these national inspectorates, they are driven together by common pressures and innovations across the EEPS:

'One of the ways that policy makers have tended to respond to concerns arising from PISA results is to try to strengthen their accountability measures so inspectorates in a number of countries have moved up the policy priority level and hierarchies –and Sweden is probably the best example of that actually. It has moved the policy

priority hierarchy quite substantially and again people have had to learn very quickly and move from what was previously a pretty low key, fairly well-established mechanism within government to suddenly finding themselves quite high profile with expectations on inspectorates and inspectors growing considerably in countries across Europe. I think PISA has been a big driver for that. The whole policy agenda in Europe in the last 20 years was the school effectiveness movement stress on accountabilities [and its] implications for what inspectorates do and one of the ways, I think, that the inspectorates have seen that they can help reflect on how their role might develop is to engage with other inspectorates across Europe. I think the combination of the policy imperatives, the impact of PISA, the necessity for inspectorates to change and inspectors becoming both more important and more vulnerable in the policy community... have seen SICI as a way of doing it. SICI hasn't advertised itself, this happens by word of mouth. [EuPA-1]

Coping with the shifting contexts of inspection and the rise of data in school evaluations, SICI inspectors are Europeanizing by more closely defining their distinctive expertise. They claim 'unique access to the reality of the classroom' as a means of defending their expertise while facing the challenge of standardisation⁴:

⁴ Although this is a general SICI view, the situation varies in different countries, and perhaps especially in countries with newly established inspection systems. In Sweden, for example, classrooms and the quality of lessons are not targeted at present.

'We, the European inspectors, are the only people going into the classroom, going to see how qualitative lessons are given. All the others don't do it, they just have data..... [EuPA-5]

Knowledge and judgment are the lodestones of their approach:

Fundamentally, when society hires an inspector, it hires the ability to make judgements and to establish relationships (SICI 2010; 15)

While in some countries inspectorates are threatened by competing evaluation systems, the main problem is constant system redesign and economies.

Inspectorates are always under review:

There [are] a lot of political changes in Europe, and there is also a lot of discussion about the work of external evaluation because a lot of inspectorates are under pressure. They have to prove that they have an added value on the quality of education that's a really new question. One of the items is that there is an economic crisis, the cut down of money, a looking for shortcuts, and yes, on the inspectorate. And more and more we have a liberalistic idea on outcomes, on risk-based analyses, and figures are more important today. Everywhere in Europe there is a change of direction in inspection. Most of the first countries which were members of SICI, they all had a system of full inspection, they were going to a school and everything was inspected, all the subjects, indicators of leadership, communication, everything. But I think it was our Minister who said 'hey, you have visited twice the schools, twice a full inspection, why is it necessary in your third round to have a full inspection. Again you have to have a

differentiated inspection, and that's what's [happening] all over Europe. [EuPA-2]

Like networks, associations are unstable while aiming constantly for permanence. One of SICI's difficulties has been with shaping its key actors and holding them in place:

'Your organization is as strong as the people representing the country. When an Inspectorate or the responsible [of the Inspectorate], thinks that SICI is an important organization, they are going to send strong people there – I think that's what we see now in the EC, we have Sweden, we have Scotland, we have the Netherlands ...the Czech republic is everywhere and has always been very engaged with SICI since the start, France -its thinking about it and they always want to change but its a very specific system. Just like Spain [EuPA-3]

As we have argued, SICI's activity is framed by the increase in policy activity to improve education performance throughout Europe (SICI 2008), indeed it reflects increasing and coordinated efforts for the internationalisation of inspection outcomes in Europe (Troost 2001). These developments have been given added urgency by anxiety about the Lisbon objectives and the impact of the economic crisis In Europe. The knowledge economy demands effective forms of steering and governing education systems (Jessop et al 2008 Ozga et al 2011) in which inspectorates have a significant role to play. However, as we have seen, these developments offer threats and challenges to inspectorates in a highly unstable policy context where waves of deregulation

and decentralisation are accompanied or succeeded by re-regulation and/or increased centralisation in the emergent global and European education policy fields (Lawn and Grek 2009 Helgøy et al. 2007). On the one hand there is the persistence of performance monitoring at European and (to varying degrees) at national levels through target-setting, indicators and benchmarks, and on the other the promotion of self-evaluation and 'light touch' inspections that express a 'softer' governance turn, and a concern to promote self-regulation as the best basis for constant improvement (Lawn 2006).

The governing tensions in and across different national systems and within the emergent European education policy space present considerable dilemmas for SICI and its constituent national inspectorates. We have discussed the responses of SICI to these dilemmas, and in the conclusion we will return to the questions about the role of inspectorates with which we started this paper, namely their positioning in governing the European Education Policy Space, and their ways of working that take the national into the international, and vice-versa. Up to this point we have focused on SICI's active engagement in the European Education Policy Space, at a time of considerable challenge to the expertise of inspectorates, that may also offers opportunities for more active engagement with policy. We now turn to consideration of the national inspectorates in our study: Scotland, Sweden and England, and consider if they, too, are engaging with 'Europe'.

Governing by Inspection: from regulation to meditation?

In the discussion above we have tried to illustrate how SICI has attracted new policy actors into its work, while developing and sharing a sense of collective identity as a community of practice. We are working with concepts of 'soft' governance and Jacobssen's thesis that governing practices in Europe are developing across a range *regulative* to *inquisitive* and *meditative* (see above pp 2-4). All such forms of activity are evidenced in our data on SICI. We are also looking for these governing forms in our selected national sites, where we find three national systems offering a range of contrasting approaches to inspection, all of which are in a significant state of development and change. At the outset of our research we identified a continuum from the centralised and highly regulatory policy space of Ofsted in England, now turning towards very focused, targeted inspection of underperformance, to the re-regulated space of Sweden, where inspection is increasingly juridified, to Scotland, which 'teaches' self- evaluation throughout Europe and beyond (Grek and Ozga 2012). In addition, these policy spaces are more or less 'open' to policy learning in and from Europe (Grek et al 2009, Segerholm and Astrom 2007).

In fact since early 2010, when we started our work, there has been constant change in the national construction of inspection in these three contexts, change that to a greater or lesser extent mirrors developments in SICI. At different times, and with different effects, national associations have sustained SICI in its work, and acted as hubs for international/European effects. Let us now look at the interactions between the national inspectorates, SICI-and the European Education Policy Space more generally.

For example, with reference to the Scottish Inspectorate, we note that Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education, Scotland (HMIE) had a major role in the ESSE project that reflected its expertise and standing in relation to the key policy technology of school self-evaluation. Although HMIE have a long history, its European networking and undoubted influence largely stem from its creation of the school focused evaluation system, How Good is our School (HGIOS). This model marked Inspection in Scotland off from the English Ofsted model and 'supported partnership with Scottish local authorities' (SPA-3). Scottish influence can be explained by reference to their early involvement with SICI centrally, their early development of a quality framework, Scotland's relatively good performance in PISA in 2000 and the fact that HGIOS was produced in a form that was easily adapted in schools and that spread through the dominance of English language publications in the new field of school improvement. Indeed the HGIOS format [revised over time] has been translated into many European languages. The Scottish Inspectorate travels to and is invited back by many national inspectorates across Europe looking at developing school self evaluation :

... we have, for instance, presented on what we do in Scotland. And that's caused considerable interest and they've come back to us and asked for more. ... Well on the entire self-evaluation system in Scotland. ... how inspection fits with evaluation. Some of these countries have inspectorates, some don't. So they're always interested

in that relationship. They're interested in what the expectations of schools are. (SPA- 2)

The influence of the Scottish Inspectorate has also travelled well because of its high reputation, which is promoted within SICI by policy actors who use the Association to promote that reputation further: as the former HMSCI, Douglas Osler, says: 'The Scottish inspectorate is looked upon as one of the leading if not THE leading inspectorate in Europe.' The promotion of the Scottish model is inflected with distancing from the English model: to quote another former HMSCI, when addressing a SICI conference: 'Scotland is not England, everything you know about Ofsted, forget' (Donaldson 2008). That distancing took on a strongly European dimension with the election of a Scottish National Party (SNP) government in Scotland in 2007, first as a minority, then, after 2011 as a majority government with an agenda for Scottish independence. The pursuit of independence is supported through the discursive alignment of Scotland with small, successful European states, and with the European 'project' more generally. The Scandinavian nations, in particular, have become comparators in terms of education performance, and partners in collaborative engagement is building a community of practice of inspection:

I think they are (Swedes), in some ways, closer to our way of thinking than Ofsted would be, say. The Skandics actually, we're quite interested in. Norway has spent some time with us. They had an OECD review in Norway last December they have a directorate of education and training in Norway which is an organisation, an agency of

government very like ours, actually –there's a sense in which we feel we're almost evolving towards similar territory from different starting points (SPA-1)

Yet the situation of the Swedish Inspectorate is rather different. As a second-generation member of SICI, engagement in and impact on the organisation in the early years from the Swedish inspectorate seems to have been limited. In 2003 Sweden reinstalled school inspection after having closed down a system of regional organisation of inspectors in 1990. The reinstalled inspection was part of the National Agency for Education's (NAE) responsibility and a programme of full inspection in a six-year cycle was begun. Inspectors made occasional study visits to other inspectorates, (England and Scotland are mentioned most often) and a small number also attended SICI conferences. The arrival of the Nordic countries into SICI is a new development:

I think also you see the importance of the inspectorate in the Scandinavian countries was also changing. Denmark had no inspectorate, and they now have. Also the importance of the Norwegian inspectorate, they are also going to organize a workshop this year (EuPA-2)

When the conservative-liberal-centre coalition won the 2006 election in Sweden, the new education minister announced 'sharper' school inspection and a public commission was appointed to present a new order for school inspections. In their report (SOU 2007:101) SICI is mentioned briefly as an organization that provides service to its members through newsletters and

workshops. The NAE is said to 'have taken part in a few activities, among other things within the area of ICT.' (SOU 2007:101, 171) The commission concluded that relations with other countries' inspectorates probably could add knowledge and experiences in order to develop inspection in Sweden (SOU 2007:101, 171). A new national agency, the Swedish Schools Inspectorate (SI) was subsequently launched in October 2008 and a formal relationship with SICI was established. One of the members of the SICI Executive Committee is from the SI. A small number of inspectors go to SICI workshops on a rotating basis, and interviews with members of the SI suggest that they find them 'inspiring'. Learning takes place but it is not a question of copying others, more to 'learn from differences' (SI Officer 4). First generation inspectorates are still important as 'teachers'.

There is an enormous interest in issues of inspection in many countries. And I am thinking of the Baltic States and countries that belonged to the former communist states of Eastern Europe, and /---/ these countries form contacts, want to have networks, invite. And Scotland, England and Ireland, they are extremely generous and have perhaps given themselves a lead in that work. And they are entitled to that, at least so far. (SI Officer 2)

Sweden also seems to attract interest from other newcomers, like Norway and Denmark. Older inspectorates also visit Sweden, for example inspectors from Germany. SICI's importance as an arena for inspiration, 'learning' and 'teaching' for the Swedish inspectorate and inspectors has increased more

recently. Through SICI European inspection practices and important areas for inspection are noticed

And it is quite clear that the education objectives in the Lisbon strategy, of course they direct somehow. They are defined and they direct us to some degree. /---/ and the reason the Lisbon strategy has formulated these objectives must be because problems common to many countries have been identified /---/ this can also be noticed when SICI decides themes for their workshops (SI Officer 6)

Becoming more active in SICI means taking more responsibility for its activities, and Sweden organized a SICI workshop on the theme 'The Impact of Inspection' in Stockholm in late November 2011. Although Sweden has its own way of doing inspection there is evidence that SICI is perceived as a space where inspection ideas and practices are exchanged, nurtured and expanded, perhaps, as one leading officer in the Inspectorate said, leading to a 'homogenisation of school inspection' (SI Officer 7).

If we now consider connections between Ofsted and SICI, or, indeed, connections between the inspectorate in England and the wider European policy space, there is a clear history of close connections between Ofsted and the Netherlands inspectors' group. They had similar interests and procedures, if not the same political context in which to work. In the early years of SICI, around 2000, Netherlands and England seemed to be working closely, and the former Senior Chief Inspector, David Bell, stated that:

Our conversations with our Dutch colleagues have been particularly fruitful. In Holland, there is a statutory responsibility for inspection to contribute to improvement, which has never been the case in England despite the Ofsted strapline 'Improvement through Inspection'.

[MacBeath 2006 p30]

However those close relations were, perhaps, untypical as Ofsted, during the period in which SICI was developing, seems to have been rather disengaged and introverted, at least according to a member of the Scottish Inspectorate:

.So essentially Ofsted had nothing to learn from anybody else and operated very much within its own shell. He (Chris Woodhead-the HMSCI at the time) would tolerate missionary work if you like but he himself was not at all interested in what was happening outside the boundaries of England. He came across as though he seemed to be fairly confident that he had got it right and everyone else was wrong. He particularly resented the Scottish building of self-evaluation as he was very clear of the view that self-evaluation was not part of the solution but part of the problem. (ESPA-6)

Ofsted is, perhaps, better understood as the recipient of requests for information rather than as an active agent promoting a particular inspection form and seeking to establish it in Europe. Ofsted's reach is global rather than European, and the Ofsted approach is disseminated through its response to a constant series of requests for visits from across Europe and the wider world, coming through the Ministry, via the British Council networks or directly. The range and number of these requests mean that they have to be

managed by email or telephone, and sometimes rejected because of pressure of work [EPA-3]. For example, a visit of 20 educationalists focused on the relation between inspection and the quality of school leadership. One three month period in 2011 saw 24 such visits. The discussion of Ofsted's presentations to visitors tends to focus on such issues as the independence of Ofsted from the Department for Education, on the disparity between the size of the organisation and its impact on the system, and on the quality and refinement of the Ofsted data. There is little evidence, in our analysis of documents or in our interviews, of the promotion of a particular approach or methodology beyond the English context.

However a recent change, which connects to the idea of a community of practice engaged in mutual learning, is that Ofsted wants to learn from these visits, rather than just telling visitors about Ofsted:

'...we want increasingly to learn from the visits that come to us. Rather than presenting to them, we want to spend more time than has been the case saying well what do you do in your countries that we can learn from, and then in due course we'll bring that knowledge to our unit and say-you know in Sweden, or Scotland, or wherever-actually in this area they're ahead of us-and you will know you can't import from any other country frankly to lets say-England-without adapting whatever model for various cultural reasons. So I'd suggest that [the inspection] framework development in the future will be influenced by this knowledge' [EPA 2)

Conclusion

In moving towards a provisional conclusion, then, based on our work so far, we can identify differences in the governing practices of the three national inspectorates, as well as differences in their engagement with Europe, as represented by SICI. HMIE in Scotland are actively engaged in the governing work of inspection in Europe: they have promoted a specific approach to school self-evaluation, especially in the Accession countries, and they are developing active networks of cooperation and learning with the 'Skandic' countries. Their work both responds to and drives SICI's search for a governing role, and they promote and create a space for exchange, brokering and thinking about inspection not just in Scotland but in Europe. In doing this, they are carrying their new national role as 'teachers' of the system, models of good practice and reflexivity in a new inspection form into the European policy space, and in so doing they are making that space. This may well be an instance of a mature inspection system, in a specific political context, moving from regulative and inquisitorial modes of governing (both of which are expensive and problematic in terms of trust) to meditative governing by inspection. This move is made possible by a particular political context, where national government seeks to align the inspectorate with its promotion of 'learning' contributing to the fostering of a community of learners across a (consequently) more independent nation. SICI provides a

resource for this project, as well as a platform for its further, external recognition.

The Swedish inspectorate, as it develops in a new form, is beginning to engage more actively with SICI, but is also focusing on developing its own regulative and audit forms of governing, which may be in some tension with both historically-embedded practices and with the possibility of moving to more meditative governing forms. Sweden is actively learning from other inspectorates, and it is also attracting inspectorates to look at its new system, so that -one way or another-a more associative form of inspection is developing in Sweden.

In England, Ofsted is moving towards a very sharply re-focused regulative model, based on its well-established practices of audit and inquisition, though there may be increasing interest in some forms of policy 'learning' from world class performance in the global arena. This, however, does not really look like a significant movement towards meditative governing by inspection.

The growth of activity in the internal association of inspectors (SICI) especially within Europe, highlights a significant response by national inspectorates to the shift from hierarchical, bureaucratic forms and relations of government to more networked governing forms and practices, which are very much facilitated by, and dependent on, data. Data do some of the work of managing problems of co-ordination and standardisation that are so important in the new decentred education policy space of Europe. But they

do not manage all the tensions and relations across and within the EEPS, and inspectorates in our three systems show increasing engagement with the associational form of relationship-across borders and sharing expertise-that this new situation requires. They also show openness to learning from one another, and are investing time and effort in ensuring good communications within their community, trends that are exhibited in policy movements globally (Steiner-Khamsi and Waldo 2012). In exchanging ideas, attending workshops, sharing technologies and approaches, they are at the same time monitoring and constructing the European education policy space.

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